Research on the Mechanism and Affect of Recommendation Marketing from the Perspective of AIDMA Theory

Liu Yakun[1], Song Yifei[2]
[1]School of Law, Linyi University, China
[2] School of International Economics and Trade, Lanzhou Jiaotong University, China
Liu Yakun E-mail:2291927921@qq.com

Abstract: Looking back at the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the past few years, although China's real economy has been hit hard, the online economy has achieved unprecedented development. To some extent, the epidemic has promoted the rapid shift of consumption demand from offline to online. At the same time, with the development of Internet technology, online shopping and social communication have become the normal life of people, and users' consumption habits and preferences have also changed. 70% of the post-1995 consumers are keen on the consumption mode of "being recommended first, purchase goods second". This paper will start from the theory of AIDMA to explore the mechanism and effect of recommendation marketing in the post-epidemic era.

Key words: recommendation marketing, AIDMA theory, KOL, network interpersonal communication

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1 Introduction

Since the emergence of recommendation marketing in 2019, the frequent "recommendation post" on various platforms has made recommendation marketing a familiar marketing tool for users. In the post-epidemic era, CCTV has repeatedly named and criticized the chaos of "fake recommendation marketing" in the industry. Now the network traffic begins to fail, channel competition intensifies, and consumers are gradually being rational. From this point of view, recommendation marketing mechanism should gradually fail, however, now recommendation posting of the major platforms is still on the rise. The recommendation marketing method is not only still effective for users, but also can effectively help brands convert the web traffic on the platform into brand sales. Domestic Internet giants and brands are still making continuous efforts in the field of recommendation marketing. Under the background of mobile Internet, the marketing system begins to open up online + offline. Advertisers began to cooperate with KOL+KOC, through the recommendation marketing way to build brand awareness and reputation. We have observed that although Internet users know it is an advertisement, they still insist on watching it to the end, making it as effective as it should be. We are curious about this: why does recommendation marketing work, despite its transparency and many problems? What is the mechanism of recommendation marketing?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Literature review of recommendation marketing

At present, there have been many researches on recommendation marketing in the academic circle. people attributed “being recommended to purchase” to essentially a kind of consumption imitation, with the herd effect driving the public to clock in. Digging a little deeper, the root of imitation is identification. The author summarized all relevant studies and sorted out three main channels of recommendation marketing: interpersonal relationship, KOL and social platform marketing.

2.1.1 KOL

There is a concept in economics called "personality economics". KOLs attract users' attention and gradually gain their trust by publishing content on social platforms. Users will unconsciously take the initiative to imitate KOL and buy the same product recommended by KOL based on trust, thus generating a strong sense of substitution and identity.

In *Research on the Influence of KOL Recommendation on Users' Purchase Intention -- Taking XiaoHongshu as an Example*, Chinese scholar Deng Sha pointed out from the perspective of opinion leaders that in the era of stock competition, a "circulation" has been formed among content, KOL, brand and platform, and KOL recommendation has become more and more important in marketing and promotion. In the context of increasingly fierce competition in the industry, major e-commerce platforms are improving and innovating according to the needs of users and changes in the market, classifying users accordingly, and producing and disseminating content accordingly. Users have gradually realized the importance of KOL, but there is still a lack of ideas on how to choose and use KOL marketing well. And currently, there is no relevant research guidance in the academic circle.

2.1.2 Interpersonal marketing

Being recommended by acquaintances is due to long-term accumulation of trust, recognition of their character and taste. According to a survey, comments from friends and family directly influence 81% consumers' purchasing decisions. In this process, consumers are unconsciously attracted by a variety of highly entertaining, infectious and emotionally saturated information to promote product, which is very likely to trigger them from watching online to experiencing it offline. To accumulate acquaintance reputation, the most important thing is to build a good, personalized "user experience."

Li Chao, a Chinese scholar, said in *The Phenomenon of Chinese Acquaintance Marketing from the Perspective of Relationship Marketing*: "As a new form of marketing, relationship marketing pays attention to the relationship and is related to the acquaintance society formed in China for thousands of years. Through the analysis of relationship marketing, it is found that acquaintance selling is a special form of relationship marketing. We can form, consolidate and develop a circle of contacts through acquaintance sales, and enhance the intensity of relationship marketing. Similarly, the phenomenon of price discrimination in acquaintance marketing is solved through the guidelines of relationship marketing. Reputation and competition complement each other and develop together. Therefore, companies should do a good job in acquaintance marketing to gain reputation and enhance competitiveness. "

2.1.3 Marketing on social platforms

The strong spread of community stems from the sense of group belonging. Users pursue a certain identity in a certain circle and share consumption preference and trust. Brand parties promote and

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recommend products on some social platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Douyin or Wechat group and other private areas, and continuously increase community activity and improve user loyalty through operation, and cultivate seed users by using community.

Chinese scholar Yang Xiaojie wrote in *Analysis of Social Platform Evaluation Advertising Marketing Strategy - Taking Sina Weibo as an Example* that interactive marketing emphasizes that marketing subjects and consumers seize each other's interests through interactive communication, and accurately grasp the timing and motivation of communication to achieve marketing purposes. There are two main situations in the release of evaluation advertisements. One is that KOL publishes evaluation according to the invitation received, and the other is that bloggers solicit the needs of fans and then conduct evaluation. The former is just in line with the phenomenon of "Zhongcao Anli" that has emerged on social platforms in recent years, that is, sharing and recommending the advantages of a product to stimulate others' purchase desire -- that is, the itch point of consumption. In order to enhance the interaction, the blogger will also set up lotteries and other benefits for reposting and comments to attract fans to repost, so as to achieve fission spread.

2.1.4 Literature summary

In the three directions summarized above, the researchers mainly focus on a certain channel for discussion. At present, there is no scholar in the academic circle to take the perspective of placing recommendation marketing in the whole link of marketing. Therefore, from the perspective of ISMAS, the author studies how recommendation marketing plays its marketing role through the whole link from the platform to the user.

2.2 Literature review on AIDMA phenomenon

2.2.1 AIDMA Law and traditional media era

In the age of traditional mass communication, we can often see some advertisements in TV programs, which are paired with popular advertising words. Even if the impression of the products is shallow, influenced by the catchy advertising words, people will always inadvertently think of those brainwashed advertising words when facing the choice of similar products. In such an environment of information asymmetry at that time, advertisements released product information through various media, impressed consumers with some advertisement words or spokespersons, guided consumer psychology and stimulated their purchasing behavior.

The study of this psychological and behavioral process gave birth to the classic marketing theory which was regarded as the norm in this era, namely AIDMA marketing law proposed by the American advertising scientist E. S. Lewis in 1898. The law points out that consumers go through five psychological stages from contact with marketing information to purchase behavior：attention, interest, desire, memory and action.

Professor Liu Dehuan and Professor Chen Siluo wrote in the article *The New Law of Advertising Communication: From AIDMA, AISAS to ISMAS* that AIDMA marketing law well reflects the marketing relationship in the traditional media environment. The mass media of television, radio, newspapers and magazines provide people with a great deal of news, entertainment and consumption information. These information after unified editing, is quickly transmitted to thousands of households. However, as the

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recipients of information, people do not have convenient and unimpeded feedback channels, which makes people need to obtain the consumption information they need through this method on the one hand. And on the other hand, rich personalized opinions and demands are simplified into "seeing or not seeing", "listening or not listening".

This centralized communication technology created AIDMA response pattern of consumers to marketing messages, thus forming a marketing strategy with "media" as the core and "attention" as the primary task: this strategy has the characteristics of strong content stimulation, wide spread and frequent repeat. Therefore, we can see both Qin Chi and Procter & Gamble are willing to "drive a Santana into CCTV" every day. Secondly, its marketing effect is often translated into media indicators such as "circulation" and "audience rating", while the rich personalized opinions and needs of consumers are simplified into "buy, not buy or have to buy", so we can hear Ford saying: "Whatever car you want, we only have black."

AIDMA law is concerned with a completely seller-led marketing. Business owners use mass media, in the rhythm of one-two-three-four, two-two-three-four, step-by-step to guide the audience's psychological emotions, from triggering the attention of consumers, making them interested and desired, all the way to making consumers remember the product, and finally inspiring a purchase. Before the Internet began to change the way people lived, AIDMA marketing principles guided effective advertising creativity and effective marketing planning.

2.2.2 Literature review and problem raising

The above summarizes that some scholars have proposed AIDMA theory and studied the recommendation economy from the perspective of KOL, interpersonal marketing and social platform marketing. However, no scholars have analyzed based on the current situation, so there is no answer to the question as to why the current recommendation marketing is still effective. Therefore, this paper will start from AIDMA theory and try to answer the following questions: is recommendation marketing effective? What is the mechanism of action?

3 Research Method

3.1 Assumptions

A)The more often a blogger interacts with a user, the more interested the user is in the product;

B)The more well-known the blogger, the more interested the user is in the product;

C)The more professional the recommendation content is, the more interested the user is in the product.

3.2 Dimension reduction

A) Recommendation marketing can show users the real use experience;

B) Recommendation marketing can meet users' network social needs (reply to comments in the comment area);

C) Recommendation marketing can provide professional information directly, which can reduce users' decision-making costs;

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D) Recommendation marketing can promote trust transformation (users' trust to the blogger is transferred to the product manufacturer).

3.3 Psychological explanation

Before buying a product, consumers usually go through steps, like attention, interest, desire, memory, action and so on. However, recommendation marketing skipped the steps of attention, interest, desire, and directly attracts attention through the plot, so that consumers have empathy, thereby leaving a memory of the brand and laying the foundation for purchase actions..

3.4 In-depth interview method

The interview questions are mainly divided into three parts. The first part mainly involves the basic information of the interviewees, including their gender, age, occupation, daily consumption habits, etc. In the second part, the dimension of the research questions is reduced. The author prepares several interview questions in advance, which are focused on the professionalism of the recommendation video content, the popularity of the blogger, and the interaction between the blogger and users. The third part mainly deals with the problems which can be dug deeper. In terms of the selection of research objects, this study mainly adopts the convenient sampling method of non-probability sampling, supplemented by the snowball sampling method based on the principle of information saturation.The author select interview subjects in different age ranges, different social occupations and different living regions as much as possible. And the interviews are carried out through face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews. The first level coding is carried out during the interview, and and the decision to continue interviewing new subjects was based on the principle of whether or not the first-level coding reached saturation, ultimately based on the actual number of interviewers needed.

In this study, 30 interviewees aged 18-45 were interviewed in depth for 15 minutes. The interviews began in January 2023 and ended in mid-February 2023. The interviewees first included college students, teachers and other professional personnel. Secondly, more research samples were collected through society, including various types of professionals in society, so as to fully understand the attitudes of all kinds of people towards this paper's opinions. According to the principle of maximum sampling of qualitative research method, all the interview contents were enough to answer the research questions when the 20th respondent was collected, and the collection of samples was ended. The respondents have differences in age, location, growth environment and other aspects, so the degree of homogeneity is low. In addition to one-on-one and face-to-face interviews, people who show interest in this thesis are randomly sought on the Internet to make online or telephone interviews. The contents have been made to a screenshot or recorded. The interview results were arranged into a verbatim manuscript, with a total of more than 10,000 words. The processing of the interview content is completed by myself. The basic information of respondents is shown in Table 1: Respondent profile table.

Table 1 Respondent profile table

Serial number	Gender	Age	occupation
1	man	18	student
2	man	19	student
3	woman	18	student

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4	woman	19	student
5	woman	22	student（Master's degree）
6	man	22	student（Master's degree）
7	woman	24	student（Master's degree）
8	man	23	freelancer
9	man	26	programmer
10	man	28	layer
11	woman	29	layer
12	woman	32	nurse
13	woman	35	teacher
14	man	33	driver
15	woman	37	freelancer
16	man	39	bank clerk
17	woman	42	designer
18	woman	42	photographer
19	woman	43	teacher
20	man	45	coach

4 Research Findings and Discussion

When we conducted in-depth interviews and tried to get answers to the questions of what dimensions of recommendation marketing affect the level of users' interest in products, we were surprised to find that in the recommendation marketing process, the visibility of the blogger, the frequency of interaction between the blogger and users, whether the content published is professional or not, and other dimensions would affect users. As for the specific aspects that will affect users' interest in the product in the recommendation mechanism, the answers of the interviewees confirmed my idea:

"I think the reason why a blogger has so many fans and has been popular for so long is that the products he recommends are of good quality and low price, otherwise they would have been unfollowed by fans."

"Although XXX has so many fans, he always interacts with his fans in the comment section and sends gifts to his fans from time to time. He is very down-to-earth. I like him."

"I'm more likely to trust professional review bloggers, who have Ph.D.s in biology and know the effects of different ingredients, than a single blogger recommending a product."

4.1 The frequency of interaction between bloggers and users is directly proportional to the level of users' interest in products

With the development of social economy and mobile Internet, "everyone has a microphone" has become a reality, and users' comments to bloggers are essentially a demand for interaction. In the in-depth interview, the respondent Xiaolin said, "When a message prompts me that the blogger I followed in XXX (a certain social platform) is updating, I will immediately check it and leave a message quickly to grab the 'sofa' (the first comment), because I really hope that my favorite blogger can 'fanpai' (reply) to me." Most of the other interviewees expressed that they hoped to interact with their favorite bloggers in the comment section. The author further explored the reasons why the interviewees liked to interact

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with bloggers, and the interviewees replied with similar contents, "I mainly want to express my ideas. When I see many people reply to me and even the bloggers agree with my ideas, I feel that I have been 'seen', as if I have found resonance." "After all, it's my favorite blogger, and I'm a fan. When he replies to me, I feel like I'm closer to him. Maybe he will remember me if I comment more." "The main comments are made by people who are old acquaintances. It feels like my half-family on the Internet. Commenting is more like making a 'joke' on my sister（the blogger）."

According to the answers of different netizens, the author sorts out three reasons for user interaction from the perspective of interactive ritual chain. First of all, the reason why most users participate in comments and hope to interact with bloggers lies in the strong "sense of presence" and "elimination of sense of distance". Emile Durkheim and Randall Collins proposed that the coexistence of bodies in the same space is one of the necessary conditions for the formation of interactive rituals. However, with the development of Internet technology, even in different regions, people can cross the barrier of time and space, realize virtual presence through media, communicate and interact with others, and bringing them closer.

Second, relying on the "virtual presence" foundation provided by the comment area, users interact frequently with bloggers, and gradually generate emotions. "The first time I was answered, I was very surprised. I didn't expect the blogger to reply to me, who didn't follow him. Later, I found that he often interacts with fans. I gradually got used to commenting on him. I think I am not just expressing my thoughts now. In fact, most of the comments give me the feeling of chatting. I'm quite accomplished." Apparently, the emotional satisfaction that respondents get from interacting with bloggers is one of the sources of their frequent comments. Bloggers, over the course of their long-term interactions with users, continuously output "symbols" recognized by both parties, form group symbols and value recognition, and form lasting and stable emotional energy to promote users' "love them and love their dogs"，then increase users' interest in the product and encourage them participate in the next interaction actively and enthusiastically.

Finally, people develop new identities through emotional transmission in interactive rituals. In the interactive ritual chain theory proposed by Collins, mutual concern and emotional connection are the core mechanism of interactive ritual function. People get temporary emotional stimulation through events or things of common concern, and obtain a high degree of mutual concern and emotional connection through constant reinforcement through rhythmic feedback, thus strengthening the identity of the group within the ceremony. It also brings emotional energy to the members involved. User identity mainly includes two aspects: one is the self-identity of the participants, and the other is the collective identity of the participants. In this in-depth interview, the respondents mainly focused on their self-identity, which was reflected in the way that they were "familiar" with the blogger or thought they were part of the community through their comments. When the user's emotion towards the blogger rises to the level of identity, the user will automatically bring into the hero's consciousness. That is, when the blogger carries out recommendation marketing and recommends some products, the user will take the initiative to support the blogger based on emotion and trust, and even help the blogger spread, publicize and recommend products.

4.2 The popularity of the blogger is directly proportional to the user's interest in the product

Through interviews with 20 respondents, it was found that almost all respondents said that "When the popularity of bloggers is higher, the more trusted the products they recommend, the more likely they

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are to buy them." During the interview, the author showed two groups of interviewees the video of two bloggers sharing the same good thing. Group A watched the video of an unknown blogger's recommendation, and group B watched a video of a well-known blogger Li Jiaqi's recommendation for the same product. After watching the video, 100% of respondents in group A thought that the product was "not necessary to buy", "not interested in the recommendation", "a little interested but not necessary to buy", 75% of the respondents in group B said that they were "recommended", "Li Jiaqi's recommendation is definitely right", and "the product is a good thing to buy and try". In view of the different responses of the two groups of interviewees, the author designed different interview questions to dig deeply.

For group A, who watched the video of an unknown blogger's recommendation, the author asked further questions according to the respondents' reaction to the products after watching the video. 80% respondents said, "I have not followed the blogger and do not know the relevant information, so I should take a wait-and-see attitude toward what he recommended." "I also don't know whether the product he recommended is an advertisement or is really useful. I don't trust a small blogger ", but there are also 20% respondents said "I think it should not be an advertisement, after all, he has no fans, this kind of blogger who just made an account in the early stage is still in the stage of accumulating fans, He should recommend really good products" "looks quite reliable, there should be no brand will find this small blogger to promote." For the respondents in Group B, 60% of them thought they could consider buying the recommendation product after watching the video, "Although I haven't used it, I think I can give it a try." "It doesn't look like it's going to crash," he said. "So many people have ordered it and it looks like it really works." "I don't need this yet, but it looks good. I'll just add it to my cart." "It's a big discount. I'm thrilled it's so much cheaper." The popularity of a blogger is a comprehensive reaction of individual ability, achievement, reputation and other aspects. The respondents in group B have different levels of interest. However, when the author continued to ask "If the same discount is offered, will you buy from this blogger (who is well-known) or choose another blogger with lower popularity?" ", 90% of respondents answered that they buy from well-known bloggers, "the well-known bloggers have higher bargaining power and more resources, so they can avoid more risks for us consumers. "Being able to have such a high reputation proves that the quality of the selected products is definitely good, and the bloggers will cherish their reputation, and the probability of buying a bad product in this case is quite low" "Big bloggers like this should have a professional team behind them, which must be more secure". The remaining 10% said they could buy either way. In addition, the higher the popularity of a blogger, the larger the fan base will be. Therefore, affected by factors such as herd mentality or influence for the low level, consumers will have a higher degree of trust in the blogger and the products recommended by them.

It can be seen that the popularity of the blogger can affect consumers' purchasing tendency and confidence, and also affect consumers' feelings for products in many aspects. The more popular a blogger is, the more trusted the user thinks he is, and the more likely the user is to buy. Therefore, the popularity of the blogger is directly proportional to the user's interest in the product.

4.3 The professionalism of recommendation content is directly proportional to users' interest in the product

In recent years, various social platforms, content platforms, short video and other media develop rapidly. Every user is a node of the network, absorbing information from all directions, encoding and

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outputting, and further releasing new influences. In the era of fragmentation, users are in urgent need of concise and effective information to meet their needs, and they pay particular attention to the content quality when browsing platforms. On the one hand, the Internet information search cost is low, but the network information is too miscellaneous, and some users have low media literacy, which makes it difficult to distinguish effective information. For example, a respondent said that "every time I search for a product on a certain platform, some bloggers say it is good, while others say it's bad, so I don't know whether to buy the product or not". When such users browse the platform, they need the content published by the blogger to be simplified complex information, so as to reduce their burden of identifying the true and false information. When a blogger explains knowledge at a high level, users tend to believe that the information has high credibility, so they are more willing to follow the blogger's advice to buy the recommended products.

On the other hand, with the gradual rationalization and specialization of contemporary consumers, they will pay special attention to the professional content such as ingredients before buying products. When a product is endorsed by a well-known expert or the content of the blogger is highly professional, users will have a higher degree of trust in the product. B respondent said, "When I am not sure whether the product I intend to buy meets my needs, or when I struggle with products of different brands in the same category, I will search for expert evaluation videos. These experts are all doctors in the field and will explain the ingredients of the product. I think it is very real, so I generally place an order directly." Bloggers make professional explanation and effective evaluation of products, and give appropriate purchase suggestions according to different needs of consumers. They can directly provide consumers with effective professional information about products, greatly reduce the time cost and experience of users searching for target products, and at the same time improve users' concentration and sense of experience when browsing content.

To sum up, the authenticity, professionalism and detail of the content displayed by the blogger will directly affect the audience's perception of the product. When the content of recommendation is more professional, it will be easier for users to make purchase decisions.

5.Summary and Reflection

5.1 Recommendation marketing can meet user's needs

The most fundamental reason for the enduring popularity of the recommendation marketing mechanism is that it can meet the needs of Internet users in multiple dimensions. In the network environment dominated by social platforms and content platforms, the Internet not only changes the user's consuming behavior link, but also encourages brand owners to start to focus on the needs of users as the core of marketing. In this study, the AIDMA theoretical research was carried out on the enduring recommendation marketing through in-depth interview, trying to answer two questions: "Why is recommendation marketing useful" and "What is the operating mechanism of recommendation marketing". By sorting out and analyzing the records of in-depth interviews, this paper verifies the assumptions in three aspects: the popularity of bloggers, the interaction frequency between bloggers and users, and the professionalism of the content published by bloggers.

But it is worth noting that this study also found that although the platform has increased management constraints, there is still a phenomenon of fake marketing in recommendation marketing. The brand's company does not make reasonable marketing strategy planning for the brand, but only relies on the

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large-scale promotion on the platform in a short period of time. The purchase traffic makes the product "shoot the fame", which leads to no real retention of consumers after the traffic. And even the negative impact such as the decline of word-of-mouth and the decline of consumer trust is caused by excessive marketing and product inconsistent with the publicity. This is what we should be wary of and reflect on.

5.2 Reflections and deficiencies of this paper

First of all, because this study uses the in-depth interview method and selects a limited number of survey personnel, there may be some group bias in the research results. Secondly, this study only selects the hypothesis of three dimensions to study the reasons why recommendation marketing mechanism plays a role from the perspective of AIDMA theory, ignoring other influencing factors. There is no specific discussion on spot investigation or special situations in different industries and fields. Therefore, in future studies, researchers in the field of brand marketing and advertising may need to pay more attention to the influence of special phenomena within the industry on the recommendation marketing.

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